

# Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives  
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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1-800-432-0680  
www.valleyrec.com

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**James Stauffer**  
Chairman

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Vice Chairman

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**Corporate Office Hours**  
Monday - Thursday  
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

**Huntingdon/Martinsburg/Shade Gap  
Office Hours**  
Monday - Thursday  
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

**Outages & Emergencies**  
1-800-432-0680

## Guest Column



### Practicing the principles

By Ethan DeVore, *Director of Member Services*


ON NOVEMBER 1, 1938, Valley Rural Electric Cooperative was incorporated to serve a need for rural residents to obtain safe, reliable and affordable electricity. In addition, the co-op had a vision to not only deliver power to your home, but to serve its members to the best of its ability. This is accomplished through following seven principles that guide the cooperative business model to continued success.

One of the most important of the seven principles is Democratic Member Control. It states that cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Elected representatives are elected from among the membership and are accountable to the membership. This principle relies heavily on you!

Although many people may view us as only their energy provider, the truth is we are much more. In fact, Valley Rural is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the communities it serves. Whether it be through providing scholarships for students seeking secondary education or giving money to those in need through the Community Service Grant program, the co-op is consistently striving to impact local communities.

As an owner-member, your voice

matters. Unlike privately owned electric utilities, you can help guide important co-op decisions that enrich the community. It's done by fulfilling your part by participating in events such as your district's nominating meeting and the annual meeting. These proceedings provide a platform for you to cast your vote on who you'd like to represent you on your board of directors. Representatives are responsible for looking out for the co-op's best interest. We value the perspective of our board members, who are also members of the co-op and community — just like you.

The districts up for election this year are 7, 8 and 9. Invitations have already been mailed and the nominating meetings will take place this month. If you have already mailed in your RSVP, make sure you are there! If you aren't a member of those districts, we strongly encourage you to make your contribution by attending the annual meeting, which will be held on April 5, 2019, at the Huntingdon Area High School. Your attendance gives us a chance to meet you and get your feedback. As a little extra incentive, you'll also get to enjoy entertainment provided by Josh Gallagher, a fourth-place finisher on season 11 of NBC's "The Voice." Lastly, you will also receive a box of LED lights that will help you save on your electric bill. We hope to see you there! 

# Co-op towers help local ham enthusiasts

By Ethan DeVore  
Director of Member Services

HAM radio is a popular hobby driven by people from all walks of life. It provides a platform of communication that fits just about any subject imaginable. From doctors to truck drivers, or college students to youngsters, ham radio could be a hobby for just about anyone regardless of age, gender, income level or even nationality. It can also provide a lifeline during emergency situations.

David Love of Williamsburg, a Valley REC member since 1988, has been involved with ham radio since the late 1970s. His interest in the hobby was sparked by a visit to a ham radio operator in Altoona.

“There was something intriguing to me about building your own antennas and contacting people around the world with a radio transmitter in your house,” says Love. “That’s what fascinated me.”

Ham radio, also known as amateur radio, is an activity that continues to provide a test bed for new and innovative transmission protocols and development of new technology. It has expanded from Morse code to cutting-edge digital communication. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) created the amateur radio service to fill the need for a pool of experts who could provide backup during emergencies. The FCC also acknowledged the ability of the hobby to advance communication and technical skills of radio, which could enhance international goodwill. Hams, as they are called, have long provided communication avenues through times of war and natural disaster at no cost and on a volunteer basis.

“It’s fun to talk with someone in Australia or some other country you happen to hear calling on the radio,” says Love. “With amateur radio, you can use a handheld radio to chat with another ham in a foreign country or across the county, all while you drive



FROM THE TOWER: Jerry Cox, of MultiComm, Inc., hangs from the co-op’s Loop Mountain tower performing some maintenance work on the antenna used to serve the local amateur radio community in Huntingdon County.

down the road or sit in your living room.”

It was 1983 when Love decided to make the move to obtain his amateur radio license. He explains to get on the air, you need to be licensed and know the rules to operate legally. U.S. licenses are good for 10 years before renewal, and anyone may hold one except a representative of a foreign government.

He went on to explain that there are three license classes — Technician, General and Extra. The most common class is the Technician License, which is the entry-level choice for most new ham radio operators. The license provides access to all amateur radio frequencies above 30 megahertz, allowing these licensees the ability to communicate locally and most often within North America.

After obtaining his license, Love began enjoying life as a ham. He went

on to meet his eventual business partner, Jerry Cox, through amateur radio. They would go on to start MultiComm, Inc., a communication company based in Hollidaysburg. Their company provides radio services to Valley Rural for day-to-day activities as well as during outages and after-hours calls. They help maintain the cooperative-owned radio towers and remote transmitter sites that cover the company’s service territory.

When Love and Cox heard that the amateur radio group in Huntingdon County was losing their tower sites and in need of space for their VHF and UHF repeaters, they approached Valley Rural in hopes that the hams could continue the use of their mountaintop equipment using the cooperative’s towers.

Once the agreement was made, it enabled the hams to provide commu-



**HAM EQUIPMENT:** David Love stands next to the UHF and VHF repeaters used to receive transmissions from handheld or mobile radios and rebroadcasts the signal at higher power and location.

nication to Huntingdon and surrounding counties using the VHF and UHF repeaters at the co-op's Loop and Jack's Mountain tower sites.

"A repeater is a base station radio that receives transmissions from a handheld or mobile radio and rebroadcasts the signal at higher power and location, enabling coverage over a wider range than can be achieved by the radio alone," Love explains.

The repeaters used at the co-op towers are still in use today and Love is very thankful to Valley Rural for granting the space that allows hams to communicate across local counties. The operators who volunteer their time and equipment provide communication for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society MS 150, which is a two-day, 150-mile bicycle fundraising event held each year that travels through the Cove area through Martinsburg, Williamsburg, Spruce Creek,

Warriors Mark and onto State College, returning to Hollidaysburg on day two.

"Thanks to the generosity of Valley REC, the hams are able to continue their hobby and help others learn more about radio," Love says.

The repeaters are available to all

ham radio operators and continue to help build interest in the hobby. Valley REC is grateful for the opportunity to help the amateur radio efforts continue in the area by contributing space that enables hams to enjoy their hobby for the future to come. ☀



**FROM THE LEFT:** Dave Love and business partner Jerry Cox hang from Valley Rural's Loop Mountain tower next to the antenna that provides amateur radio for ham operators.

## Retirees return to the co-op for a visit

By Ethan DeVore  
 Director of Member Services

VALLEY REC retirees took a trip back to work, but this time they weren't there to do their job. Instead, they enjoyed breakfast with their former colleagues while also meeting some new faces of the co-op.

"Valley Rural was a really great place to work," says Gary Atherton, who worked for the co-op for 38 years. "Although I loved my job here and really miss it, I also enjoy my retirement just as much."

The co-op has hosted the retiree breakfast each December since 2015. The former employees get a chance to tell everyone about their career with the co-op while enjoying a full course breakfast. It provides an opportunity for new employees to learn about some of the history of the cooperative by people who had first-hand experience of watching the company grow.

"When I started at Valley, there were only two substations. One was in Williamsburg and the other was in Shir-



FROM THE LEFT: Valley REC retirees Nancy Rife, Sharon Isenburg, Linda Kriedler, Betty Thompson, Ruby Shearburn are seated in front of Paul Dell, Greg Henry, and Gary Atherton. All attended the co-op's retiree breakfast held in December.

leysburg; now there are over 20," says Paul Dell, who worked for the co-op for 43 years and is nearly celebrating almost three decades of retirement.

One piece of advice the retirees all had in common to share for the current co-op staff was that Valley Rural is a

great place to work and retire from. Although they are no longer working, each retiree left a mark on the co-op that will leave an impression on the company's culture for years to come. The team at Valley Rural wishes the retirees the best. ☀️

## EASY WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY

### WEATHERIZE

Seal doors and windows with caulk, weather stripping and/or plastic film.



### SEAL IN WARMTH

Close blinds and curtains during the night to keep cold air out. Open them during the day to let sunlight in.



### COOK UP SAVINGS

Use smaller appliances, like microwaves, toaster ovens and slow cookers when possible.

